

MOVING FORWARD

Government-to-Government Program Strengthens Education Delivery in Senegal



Richard Nyberg/USAID Senegal

“[By utilizing procurement systems and processes of the Government of Senegal] the program has contributed not only to increasing the number of middle schools in Senegal, but has also built capacity – from the national Ministry of Education down to the school and community – to manage resources more efficiently and to construct and maintain quality schools for the long term.”

In 2004, USAID/Senegal began working in the West African country to build new middle schools following an increase in the number of children successfully completing primary school. The growing number of middle school students came after significant donor efforts to improve access to primary education for the country’s youngest students.

By 2007, USAID had built 58 schools through a cooperative agreement with a partner organization, helping to fulfill the Government of Senegal’s (GOS) National Education Plan 2000-2010 that ensures children in rural areas – particularly girls – walk no more than five kilometers to attend middle school. In some areas, simply having a middle school encouraged parents to continue their children’s education past the early primary grades.

However, following the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which called for more vigorous country ownership of development projects, USAID’s method for funding school construction began to shift. Instead of working through a partner organization, in 2007 USAID began working directly with the Government of Senegal (GOS) through a Fixed Amount Reimbursement (FAR) agreement to build middle schools and support school governance. A FAR is a type of Government to Government grant for a fixed amount of funding based on reasonable cost estimate approved by USAID. Under this kind of grant, USAID reimburses the partner Government for completed outputs, such as the number of schools built according to agreed-upon specifications, instead of directly funding a contractor to build the schools.

Under this FAR agreement, middle school construction has been implemented through GOS financial systems, procurement procedures, and standardized school designs. USAID annually reimburses the GOS for school construction costs at a predetermined rate and no longer periodically advances funds to the government. This, in turn, helps strengthen Senegal’s ability to manage its own construction funds and in-kind contributions from communities. All reimbursement is contingent upon USAID’s final approval of the completed work that must be done in accordance with specifications, drawings, and schedules based on internationally-accepted requirements.

A local engineer hired by USAID, together with a GOS inspector, visits each site to determine whether construction or renovation has been completed in accordance with the agreed-upon specifications. USAID pays for fixed costs – construction, school furniture, water – while the GOS provides teachers, a library, laboratory equipment, and computers with internet connectivity as part of its in-kind contribution to the project.

This approach not only helped improve the formal education system, but also allowed the project to simultaneously strengthen the Senegalese Government's organizational, financial, and technical capacities through the use of its existing systems and institutions, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Urban Planning, and the Ministry of Education who were all engaged in the school building project.

In an environment where government ministries seldom communicate with each other much less collaborate on development projects, this project successfully brought together these three ministries as well as local governments and rural communities to support middle school improvement. It has encouraged multi-sectoral collaboration as well as networking among traditionally standalone actors further strengthening the organizational capacity of the government to engage and partner with stakeholders.

Through the direct government-to-government mechanism, USAID has helped the Senegalese Government build 28 middle schools. In total, since 2004, USAID/Senegal has supported construction of 86 schools. More than 25,000 students are currently enrolled in these schools

SUSTAINABILITY BEYOND USAID

The FAR program has contributed not only to increasing the number of middle schools in Senegal, but has also built capacity -- from the national Ministry of Education down to the school and community – to manage resources more efficiently and to construct and maintain quality schools for the long term.

It encourages community involvement and strengthens the technical and leadership capacities of local entities such school management committees and local governments to become more accountable to students, parents, communities, and teachers. These organizations receive trainings that will help them assume responsibility for supporting schools, including managing the school budget, connecting schools to water and electricity grids, maintaining facilities, supporting quality school performance, and advocating for children's rights and the importance of educating girls. Furthermore, communities are mobilized to provide certain building materials and to monitor the progress and quality throughout construction – ensuring sustainability and ownership for the long term.

The education and governance objectives have been achieved by utilizing procurement systems and processes of the GOS consistent with USAID Forward goals, which call for increasing the percentage of program funds implemented through local systems to 30% over the next four years. Local systems include partner country systems and local organizations (for profit and not for profit).

QUICK FACT

Under the FAR agreement, the Senegal Government committed to building schools with its own funds – matching USAID contributions one for one. That translates to 172 middle schools for Senegalese children, rather than only the 86 schools built under USAID projects over seven years.

This story is an example of how USAID is working with host country systems as part of the USAID Forward reform agenda. Forward aims to change the way the Agency does business with new partnerships, an emphasis on innovation and focus on results.